

U.S. Serial No. 09/940,924

NIP-241

REMARKS

The Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection.

Claims 1-2, 4-6, 8-10, and 12-21 are now pending.

Claims 1-2, 5-6, 9-10, 13-14, 16-17, and 19-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Katou et al., U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2003/0172009, (Katou). Claims 4, 8, 12, 15, and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Katou et al. The Applicants traverse as follows.

Katou is not prior art to the present invention in view of the U.S. filing date of this application (August 29, 2001) and Katou's effective date as a reference (its U.S. filing date of May 12, 2003, according to Patent Office records (PAIR)). Therefore, the rejections are moot.

There being no outstanding issue of unpatentability, the Applicants request reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,



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